

5.1 Aesthetics

This analysis focuses on impacts on citywide aesthetics associated with the adoption and implementation of the General Plan, implementation of the revised Zoning Code and Subdivision Code, adoption and implementation of the Magnolia Specific Plan, and adoption and implementation of the Citywide Design and Sign Guidelines, as these actions have the potential to have aesthetic impacts.

Environmental Setting

Scenic Vistas

Although the majority of Riverside is urbanized, the hills and ridgelines that surround the City provide scenic vistas to residents of Riverside where they can experience long distance views of natural terrain. Vista points can be found throughout the City, both as viewed from urban areas toward the hills and from wilderness areas toward Riverside. These areas include the La Sierra/Norco Hills, Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park and Box Springs Mountain Reserve. The peaks of Box Springs Mountain, Mt. Rubidoux, Arlington Mountain, Alessandro Heights and the La Sierra/Norco Hills provide scenic views of the City and the region.

Scenic Resources and Visual Character

No officially designated State scenic highways or any eligible State scenic highways traverse the City or its Sphere of Influence. Interstate 15 (I-15) is an eligible State scenic highway that runs as close as one mile west of the Planning Area.

The City has designated several parkways within the City and the northern part of the Sphere of Influence that meet local criteria for designation as scenic routes. These parkways are listed in **Table 5.1-1**.

Table 5.1-1
Potential Scenic Parkway

Arlington Avenue	Chicago Avenue
Van Buren Boulevard	Overlook Parkway
La Sierra Avenue	Central Avenue
Riverwalk Parkway	Ransom Road
Magnolia Avenue	Mission Grove Parkway
Jurupa Avenue	Alessandro Boulevard
Victoria Avenue	Trautwein Road
Mission Inn Avenue	Mockingbird Canyon Road
University Avenue	

Source: Riverside General Plan, 1994.

Cultural Resources

An important part of what makes the City of Riverside a special place to live is its abundance of cultural resources. These resources enrich the City's character and form cornerstones of successful revitalization and preservation efforts. The City of Riverside's historic neighborhoods are recognized through their designation as Historic Districts and Neighborhood Conservation Areas. These geographically defined areas have a significant concentration of cultural resources that represent themes important to local history. Individually recognized cultural resources include structures ranging from single-family residences to commercial, religious and civic buildings as well as bridges, City parks and trees. A listing of designated City Landmarks, Historic Districts and Neighborhood Conservation Areas is included in the City of Riverside's website and Appendix D. A discussion of cultural resources can also be found in **Section 5.5** (Cultural Resources).

Light and Glare

Riverside is primarily urbanized, with significant existing sources of light and glare, such as street lights along roadways, parking lots and walkways, lighted recreation facilities and light emitted from residential and non-residential buildings. Buildings and structures made with glass, metal and polished exterior or roofing materials exist throughout the Planning Area; combined with existing natural and manmade light sources, these can constitute a considerable source of localized glare.

Thresholds for Determining Level of Impact

For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact will occur if implementation of the Project:

- Has an adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Substantially damages scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic highway.
- Substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the Planning Area.
- Creates a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views.

Environmental Impact

Development pursuant to Project policies and regulatory standards will result in the addition of up to 38,100 new dwelling units and 39,600,000 square feet of new non-residential construction over the 20-year horizon of the General Plan within the Planning Area. Although it is possible that development of dwelling units and non-residential areas may cause localized aesthetic impacts, the Project as a whole will not directly impact aesthetic resources because it will not have an adverse affect on scenic vistas, substantially damage

scenic resources, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings or create a new source of substantial light or glare. As development pursuant to land use policy occurs over time, such development could result in localized, indirect impacts. However, a key Project is to protect and enhance the visual character of Riverside. To avoid or minimize indirect aesthetic impacts, the Project includes THE objectives, policies and regulatory standards described below that will limit impacts to aesthetic impacts and impacts on visual resources.

General Plan

The General Plan includes the following policies that will serve to limit indirect impacts on aesthetic resources by limiting the location of development, preserving historic structures, designing street and neighborhood improvements with the purpose of preserving the visual character of the City and neighborhoods therein and preventing new sources of light and glare.

Scenic Vistas

The following policies limit impacts on scenic vistas in the Planning Area:

- Policy OS-2.2: Limit the extent and intensity of uses and development in areas of unstable terrain, steep terrain, scenic vistas, arroyos and other critical environmental areas.
- Policy OS-2.3: Control the grading of land, pursuant to the City's Grading Code, to minimize the potential for erosion, landsliding and other forms of land failure, as well as to limit the negative aesthetic impact of excessive modification of natural landforms.
- Policy OS-2.4: Recognize the value of ridgelines, hillsides and arroyos as significant natural and visual resources and should strengthen their role as features which define the character of the City and its individual neighborhoods.

Specifically related to the preservation of hillsides, the General Plan includes the Hillside Residential land use designation and applies it to properties to limit development of Riverside's ecologically sensitive and visually prominent hillside areas. This designation has been applied to most hillside areas where slopes exceed 15 percent and allows a maximum residential density of 0.63 dwelling units per acre. This designation applies to numerous hillside areas such as the La Sierra Hills, Alessandro Heights and Hawarden Hills neighborhoods. The following policies limit impacts to hillsides within the Planning Area:

- Policy LU-3.1: Aggressively pursue methods to preserve hillside open space and natural habitat.
- Policy LU-3.2: Seek annexation of properties that will reduce ridgeline/hillside development on the City's periphery.
- Policy LU-4.1: Adhere to the special protections for hillside development set forth in Proposition R and Measure C.

- Policy LU-4.2: Strictly enforce the hillside grading provisions of the City's Grading Code (Title 17) to minimize ground disturbance associated with hillside development; respect existing land contours to maximum feasible extent.
- Policy LU-4.3: Work closely with the County of Riverside, emphasizing the City's need to participate in the development review of projects proposed in surrounding unincorporated areas. Work to ensure that such developments proceed in concert with City of Riverside standards.
- Policy LU-4.4: Ensure that City comments to Riverside County on proposed new hillside development in the City's sphere of influence include recommendations for compliance with the provisions of Proposition R and Measure C, the RC Zone, the Hillside Residential land use designation, and the City's Grading Code (Title 17).
- Policy LU-4.5: Seek opportunities for new or enhanced trail/pedestrian linkages between hillside areas and other components of Riverside Park.

Scenic Resources and Visual Character

Table 5.1-2 lists Parkways that are proposed as part of the General Plan. These will replace the parkways noted in Table 5.1-1. Figure LU-2 in the General Plan designates the parkways as such. These parkways will enhance the visual character of the Planning Area.

**Table 5.1-2
Parkways**

Parkway	Description
Victoria Avenue	A historic parkway lined with many species of trees, long recognized as an important local and regional scenic resource and listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The lush landscaping and quiet surroundings make Victoria Avenue feel like a linear park.
Magnolia Avenue/Market Street	A seventeen-mile-long historic parkway which was once Riverside's grandest street, this street has the potential to be restored to much of its former stature.
University Avenue	This major connector between Downtown, the Eastside neighborhood and UCR will support a symbiotic mix of uses along a visually pleasing road corridor.
Van Buren Boulevard	With a dramatic crossing of the Santa Ana River at the City's northern edge and the City's greenbelt at its southern end, Van Buren already provides connections to key elements of Riverside Park.
Riverwalk Parkway	Located near La Sierra University, this new drive will provide a water-lined parkway connection between neighborhoods through a portion of the La Sierra community.
La Sierra Avenue	Stretching from near the Santa Ana River in the north to the Lake Mathews area in the south, La Sierra Avenue the prime thoroughfare for western Riverside.
Overlook Parkway	The connection of the two ends of Overlook across the Alessandro Arroyo poses an opportunity to create a beautiful and dramatic new parkway.
Canyon Crest Drive	This lushly landscaped drive traverses rolling, scenic terrain in connecting the Eastside/University neighborhoods with open space amenities to the south.

The General Plan also includes policies to enhance the City's scenic resources and visual character.

Policy PS-11.1: Protect resources listed in the Historical Resources Inventory from premature or inadvertent demolition because of damage caused by a disaster episode.

Policy PS-11.2: Take reasonable steps to prevent the loss of historic buildings without endangering public safety or contributing to additional property damage.

Policy CCM-2.2: Balance the need for free traffic flow with economic realities and environmental and aesthetic considerations, such that streets are designed to handle normal traffic flows with tolerances to allow for potential short-term delays at peak-flow hours.

Policy CCM-2.8: Design street improvements considering the effect on aesthetic character and livability of residential neighborhoods, along with traffic engineering criteria.

Policy CCM-2.10: Emphasize the landscaping of parkways and boulevards.

Policy CCM-2.11: Consider the use of special design traffic control devices which reflect the historic or aesthetic character of the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Policy CCM-2.14: Ensure that intersection improvements on Victoria Avenue are limited to areas where Level of Service is below the City standard of D. Allow only the minimum necessary improvements in recognition of Victoria Avenue's historic character.

Policy OS-1.6: Ensure that any new development that does occur is effectively integrated via convenient street and/or pedestrian connections, as well as through visual connections.

Policy OS-1.15: Recognize the value of major institutional passive open spaces, particularly cemeteries, as important components of the total open space systems and protect their visual character.

Policy AC-3.3: Use public art and the proposed Art in Public Places Program in coordination with landscaping, lighting, paving and signage to create gateways upon entering a Cultural Village.

Policy AC-4.3: Promote the inclusion of artistic/aesthetic considerations in local decision-making.

Policy AC-4.4: Build a City government culture that supports art by ensuring implementation measures related to arts and aesthetics are a part of all City functions (i.e. City Council, Public Works, Planning, Parks and Recreation, etc.).

Policy AC-4.5: Use City policies, incentives, land use regulations and design guidelines to weave art into every aspect of life in the community. Encourage inclusion of works of art and cultural events into education, government, health, shopping and business.

Policy AC-4.10: Encourage the expansion of the location of visual and performing art into employment areas, such as the City's business parks and Justice Center.

Policy AC-4.12: Encourage the preservation and rehabilitation of existing cultural facilities in Riverside, such as the Fox Theater.

Policy AC-4.15: Use art in public places to enhance the image of Riverside and emphasize its distinctive character.

- Policy AC-4.16: Encourage the development of a coordinated flexible citywide “Art in Public Places” program for new development to provide public art or spaces for art as part of the development project.
- Policy AC-4.17: Encourage the development of arts program objectives, and provide standards and guidelines for the installation of public art. Address issues of artist selection, project siting, funding, etc.
- Policy AC-4.18: Prepare a Master Plan for Art in Public Places.
- Policy AC-4.19: Include art spaces in new public construction when appropriate and create opportunities and incentives for private developers to include art spaces in private development.
- Policy AC-4.20: Use art in public places, in coordination with landscaping, lighting, paving and signage, at the City’s regional and local gateways, freeway corridors and Metrolink Stations to strengthen Riverside’s identity as a cultural and arts center for regional visitors.
- Policy AC-4.21: Promote the establishment of a committee or board to implement City gateways that would further refine and identify location, funding, design, scale and artist selection.

The policies listed above will work to avoid impacts. Existing City standards and practices regarding minimization of visual impacts and protection of scenic resources/scenic character will continue to be applied generally or to individual development proposals as appropriate. These practices are independent of Project adoption. These standards and practices include:

- Situate any streets in natural saddles rather than in visually prominent locations.
- Require that grading activity in the Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park’s periphery not encroach the Park’s boundaries and utilizes naturally appearing contours.
- Require developers of properties adjoining Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park to provide walls and/or fencing to the specifications of Riverside’s Park and Recreation Department.
- Require visual screening of outdoor storage or parking areas in the periphery of Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park, using landscaping or walls as necessary that further the Park’s natural appearance.
- Continue enforcement of existing regulations for the abatement of abandoned vehicles, junk storage and similar items.
- Implement a targeted program of façade and streetscape improvements consistent with the 2001 Arlington Community Plan.

- Give priority in the development review process to the preservation/restoration of buildings more than 50 years old, in accordance with the Design Guidelines in Chapter 4 of the 2001 Arlington Community Plan.
- Use Design Review as appropriate to ensure the visual compatibility of new developments.
- Through the Market Street Gateway Project complete aesthetic improvements to Market Street from Highway 60 to 14th Street.
- Continue to require all property owners and homeowners associations to landscape and maintain land between the street curb and private property. Design techniques for new developments shall be used to avoid similar maintenance problems.
- Where new development creates backup landscape areas, the developer shall be responsible for provision of adequate funding to maintain the backup area in perpetuity. This can include a requirement for an endowment to the City.
- Private development on properties abutting the freeways should include aesthetic treatment and landscaping on the freeway side of the property.
- Billboard or pole signs visible from the freeway should be limited to the maximum extent consistent with Federal, State and City requirements.

The Design Guidelines will also serve to enhance Riverside's visual character and avoid impact by promoting and maintaining design continuity in the City's neighborhoods. Refer to the discussion below under "Design Guidelines."

Conclusion

Development pursuant to General Plan objectives and policies and adherence to existing City standards and practices will work to implement the City's aesthetic aims. Future individual development projects will be assessed as per CEQA requirements to determine the presence of any significant impacts to the City's visual character and scenic resources. Impact at the programmatic level is less than significant.

Light and Glare

The City of Riverside is largely urbanized with substantial existing sources of light and glare; however, new development projects within the Planning Area have the potential to create new sources of light, largely from street lights and building lights. In addition, new structures could be a significant source of new glare if they incorporate reflective building materials. Depending upon the location and scope of individual development projects, the impact to surrounding uses could be significant.

The General Plan includes policies that may facilitate new sources of light and glare that will adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area:

- Policy PS-5.2: Develop objectives and detailed standards and guidelines for the treatment of public streetscapes to improve safety and walkability. Recommendations should address street trees, street lighting, street furniture, traffic calming and other pertinent issues. Establish funding sources and priorities and set forth a phased improvement program.
- Policy PS-5.3: Prioritize locations for potential pedestrian safety enhancements, including modified signage, lighted crosswalks and other similar facilities.
- Policy PS-5.4: Require that new development provide adequate safety lighting in pedestrian areas and parking lots.

However, existing City standards and practices regarding minimization of light and glare impacts will continue to be applied generally or to individual development proposals as appropriate. These practices are independent of Project adoption. These standards and practices include:

- Require lighting studies by a qualified lighting engineer to avoid light spillage for any development in Sycamore Canyon Wilderness Park's periphery.
- For all development proposals, the City will examine potential light and glare effects associated with structures and on-site activities as required under CEQA, and will ensure that features are incorporated into projects to avoid any adverse lighting and glare impacts.

Zoning Code

The Zoning Code requires all site plans to come under review to prevent unlawful or nonconforming uses and structures. The Zoning Code regulates building setbacks, building heights, land uses, landscaping, parking, etc. Article V (*Base Zones and Related Use and Development Provisions*) establishes clear standards for use and development of all properties. The Residential Conservation Zone (RC) works to protect prominent ridges and hillsides, slopes, arroyos, ravines and canyons, and other areas with high visibility or unique topographic conditions from adverse development practices for consistency with General Plan objectives and voter approved initiatives. Article VIII (*Site Planning and General Development Provisions*) provides standards for fences and walls, landscaping, screening of exterior mechanical equipment, treatment of trash enclosures, and similar features that affect the visual integrity of a development site. Implementation of the Zoning Code will allow each project to be reviewed in light of these standards to limit impact on scenic vistas, scenic resources, and visual character. Performance standards in the Code regulating site lighting will work to avoid light and glare impacts. Impact is less than significant.

Subdivision Code

The Subdivision Code requires that all new subdivisions conform to the proposed General Plan and the Zoning Code. The Subdivision Code requires landscaped medians in larger arterial streets and landscaped parkways on local streets in all new subdivisions. The Subdivision Code also encourages continuation of the City's existing grid of streets and

maintaining the City's urban design integrity. The regulations encourage quality design. Impact will be less than significant.

Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines provide pictorial guidance on building treatments, façade articulation, site planning, sign guidelines and other matters in an effort to improve the overall visual quality of new development citywide. The Guidelines prevent large windowless blank walls through building articulation and vegetation screening and establishing appropriate landscape areas along walls. The Guidelines also provide requirements for façade and signage treatments to prevent the use of highly reflective surfaces, large, blank, unarticulated wall surfaces, exposed, untreated precision block walls, chain link fencing, barbed wire, and materials requiring high maintenance such as stained wood, shingles or metal siding. The Design Guidelines also encourage the use of neutral paint colors, subtle lighting and courtyard entrances where feasible. The Design Guidelines limit impacts to aesthetic resources by reducing interruptions of scenic vistas, maintaining and enhancing scenic resources and visual character, and reducing light and glare. As the Guidelines encourage high-quality design, impact will be less than significant.

The Design Guidelines include lighting guidance that illumination for security purposes be adequate and not overly bright and that light sources are shielded to confine light spread within site boundaries. The Guidelines also strongly encourage that signs consist of backlit individually cut letter signs instead of signs that are illuminated with spotlights. Lighting guidance and restrictions on use of reflective material on buildings will avoid potentially significant light and glare impacts.

Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan

As stated previously in Section 3.0, the Magnolia Avenue Specific Plan has been prepared to create a comprehensive and detailed framework to guide growth and change along the City's most prominent local thoroughfare. As a means of ensuring the coordinated development of the City's major local transportation backbone, this plan will provide detailed implementation tools and design standards consistent with but more specific than the General Plan. The Specific Plan also includes detailed land use regulations design standards for each of the corridor's several districts and facilitates transit usage along Riverside's principal arterial roadway. As the Specific Plan encourages high-quality design, impact will be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required, as the impact will be less than significant at the programmatic level. With adherence to and implementation of the above Project policies and continuation of noted City standards and practices, program-level impact related to light and glare will be less than significant. The significance of impacts to aesthetic resources resulting from specific future development projects will be determined on a project-by-project basis. If project-level impacts are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required.

Level of Impact after Mitigation

With adherence to and implementation of the above General Plan policies, the Project's potential aesthetic impacts will be reduced below a level of significance at the programmatic level.

The significance of aesthetic impacts resulting from specific future development projects will be evaluated on a project-by-project basis. If project-level impacts are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required per CEQA.

References

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